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ABSTRACT

Competency testing for either graduation from high school, or as a method for assessing whether a student should advance to a higher grade level, is the focus of this annotated bibliography. Included are annotations that relate to accountability, competency testing, program descriptions where competency testing is utilized, general testing concepts, competency testing requirements, and basic education concepts. All entries are dated 1976-1978. (DS)

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Competency Testing. An Annotated Bibliography.

Michael Jackson and Barbara Battiste

Competency testing for either graduation from high school, or as a method for assessing whether a student should advance to a higher grade level, is a topic that is a pervasive theme in American education. With that in mind, the following bibliography was compiled. It is intended to be used as a starting point for those educators interested in adding to their knowledge of this particular topic. Included in the bibliography are annotations which relate to: accountability, competency testing, program descriptions where competency testing is utilized, general testing concepts, competency testing requirements, and basic education concepts Since the competency testing for graduation or advancement is an integral part of several other educational movements, it is necessary to present a bibliography with a diversity of topics. The entries are taken from a wide variety of sources, and present opposing points of view. It is intended that this bibliography will provide a framework of references for one who is interested in this area.

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ACCOUNTABILITY

Balmer, Louis E. "Accountability: A Threat or a Tool?" High School Journal, 60 (February, 1977), 204-10.

Attributing the accountability movement in education to the influence of the business world, the author discusses its advantages and potential abuses. A clear definition of accountability and local control of accountability measures are suggested ways to make the movement work for educators.

Carver, Fred D. "Accountability's Underlying Issues: No Easy Solutions." High School Journal, 60 (January, 1977), 175-83.

The complexity of defining the purposes of education in a pluralistic society, a central issue in the accountability movement, is among the issues discussed. Benefits attributed to the accountability movement include increased communication between educators and the public, and a re-evaluation of educational goals and procedures.

Keller, Edward P. "Accountability: Only Through Involvement." High School Journal, 60 (January, 1977), 170-4.

Michigan's Six Step Accountability Model is used as an example of controversial statewide assessment programs. Faced with multiple criticisms of the initial plan, state officials involved local educators and administrators in a revision process resulting in a more successful program, offered as a guide for others considering such a move.

McWilliams, Jettie M. and Thomas, Andrew C. "The Measurement of Students' Learning: An Approach to Accountability." Journal of Educational Research, 70 (September/October, 1976), 50-2.

A research study to measure the amount of retention and learning of elementary students over a school year is discussed, concluding such diagnostic programs could be used to better individualize instruction.

Silberman, Arlene. "Accountability: A Horror Story?" Instructor, 28 (November, 1977), 28.

Having visited elementary schools experiencing the effects of the accountability movement, the author reports both favorable and unfavorable conditions. Anxiety prone teachers and administrators were seen as the primary cause for creating narrowly-focused drill centers in the early grades, while they were not credited with producing higher achievement test scores than their counterparts maintaining more conducive learning environments.

Tapscott, Barbara. "Accountability: A Process for Improving Student Performance." High School Journal, 60 (January, 1977), 143-50.

Responsibilities and fears of educators concerning accountability are discussed, along with means of lessening professionals' anxiety. A four-part accountability process is explored through an exemplary program in Burlington, North Carolina, designed to improve reading achievement.

Webb, Robert M. "Accountability: A Two-Way Street." School and Community, 64 (December, 1977), 28-9.

The author defends the right of citizens to demand accountability from their school officials and staff; however, he admonishes that the schools also have the right to demand the cooperation and responsible participation of citizens. The extablishment of accountability committees within each community is suggested to assist in determining district goals and measurement criteria.

Weingartner, Charles. "Mind Forg'd Manacles." Educational Studies, 8 (Spring, 1977), 21-7.

Accountability and its accompanying educational movements are criticized as impersonal, and therefore, inappropriate for education, which deals primarily with people. The business-world approach to education, complete with "mechanistic metaphors" ignoring or negating the importance of the individual is likened to the "Newspeak" phenomena of George Orwell's novel, 1984. Educators and others are urged to loudly express their concerns about the dehumanizing effects of accountability.

COMPETENCY TESTING

Bracey, Gerald W. "Some Reservations About Minimum Competency Testing." Phi Delta Kappan, 59 (April, 1978), 549-52.

The author claims progressive or humanistic education is not responsible for the achievement test score decline or the existence of incompetence among high school graduates, as has been charged by some. Alternative causes explored include: dominance of television and audio-visual technologies, opposition by educators to standardized achievement tests, and curriculum revisions.

Cawelti, Gordon. "National Competency Testing: A Bogus Solution." Phi Delta Kappan, 59 (May, 1978), 619-21.

The executive director of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development examines assumptions behind the clamor for national competency testing and finds most have faulty bases. Detrimental side effects of such a testing program are explored in social and educational contexts. Major negative aspects include: loss of local control, resegregation of schools, curriculum imbalance, potential lessening of higher level academic achievement, and unnecessary proliferation of testing.

Ebel, Robert L. "The Case for Minimum Competency Testing." Phi Delta Kappan, 59 (April, 1978), 546-9.

Humanistic and other "progressive" educational philosophies are blamed for much of the publicized incompetence of many high school graduates. Charging the cognitive domain has been neglected, the author suggests a return to the essential purpose of education, that of developing cognitive skills, by means of competency requirements. Domain-sampling competency tests, scored to indicate degrees of excellence in achievement are suggested by the author.

Fremer, John. "In Response to Gene Glass." Phi Delta Kappan, 59 (May, 1978), 605-6.

The Educational Testing Service's director of test development for elementary and secondary school programs defends the functional literacy test developed by that agency for use in Florida. Based on the assumption that standards should reflect more than an individual's progress, the author recommends the use of minimum standards set by local districts following given procedures.

Gilman, David Alan. "Minimum Competency Testing: An Insurance Policy for Survival Skills." NASSP Bulletin, 61 (March, 1977), 77-84.

Factors contributing to the development of minimum competency testing and the growth of the movement are discussed favorably. Alternative approaches and concerns of educators are explored.

Glass, Gene V. "Minimum Competency and Incompetency in Florida." Phi Delta Kappan, 59 (May, 1978), 602-5.

The author, a widely recognized educational researcher, attacks Florida's 1976 Educational Accountability Act and its minimum competency requirements . Excerpts of interviews with those officials responsible for the technical elements of the testing program provide support for the author's concerns. The abandonment of the testing program before the end of 1978 is predicted.

Lloyd, R. Grann. "The Competency Testing Movement." Negro Educational Review, 29 (January, 1978), 2-3.

The author poses a series of questions concerning the limitations and dangers of minimal competency testing. Among issues raised are: political and educational sources of the movement, determination of competence, and neglect of untested curricular areas.

Marlowe, John. "Testing, Testing. . . .Can You Hear Me?" Phi Delta Kappan, 58 (November, 1976), 256-8.

California's High School Proficiency Examination and "early out" policy are criticized, focusing on the content of the exam, labeled trivial. Other dangers, including the creation of a narrowly educated citizenry and domination of the state bureaucracy are discussed.

McClung, Merle Steven. "Are Competency Testing Programs Fair? Legal?" Phi Delta Kappan, 59 (February, 1978), 397-9.

The author, an attorney and educational law consultant, discusses aspects of competency testing programs which warrant in-depth consideration. These include: inadequate phase-in periods, inadequate pairing of testing and instruction, racial discrimination, and provision of remedial programs and teacher evaluation guidelines.

Nathan, Joe and Jennings, Wayne. "Educational Bait-and-Switch." Phi Delta Kappan, 59 (May, 1978), 621-5.

The authors support a philosophy of competency-based graduation, but regard it as a multi-faceted concept, incongruent with the exclusive use of written, standardized tests as measures of competence. Myths surrounding competency requirements and testing are examined, with alternative strategies suggested to develop practical competency-based graduation programs.

Reys, Robert E. "Stop! Look! Think!" Arithmetic Teacher, 25 (October, 1977), 8-9.

The author primarily discusses the hazards of a bandwagon approach to basic skills and competency testing. Issues raised include: complexity of identifying basic skills; inadequacies of norm-referenced, standardized tests; and lack of communication between educators and laypersons, contributing to unduly high expectations of the success of tests in raising functional skill levels of students.

Wise, Arthur E. "Minimum Competency Testing: Another Case of Hyper-Rationalization." Phi Delta Kappan, 59 (May, 1978), 596-8.

The author discusses educational policy decisions concerning minimum competency testing and the assumptions on which the decisions are based. The possibility of legislating higher achievement levels is questioned, in contrast to generally successful policy decisions to equalize educational opportunities. Recommendations for more effective policy-making concerning competency programs recognize the need for research on the problems of poor learners and teachers.

DESCRIPTION OF AVAILABLE MATERIALS

Anchorage School District; Anchorage, Alaska.

A long-range assessment program, criterion-referenced tests for specific grade levels, and the process involved in developing these materials are described. As the materials are still undergoing an evaluation and revision process, they are not presently available.

Denver Public Schools; Denver, Colorado.

A brief history of Denver's Proficiency and Review Testing Program, first administered in 1960, is available. The tests are secure, but similar sample items may be obtained for subtests in the subject areas of mathematics, spelling, and language.

Dominican High School; Detroit, Michigan.

A Competency Based Education program (C.B.E.) is used at this high school. Problems of transition to C.B.E. are outlined in a cover letter. A handbook contains the objectives, faculty goals, and specific competencies included. A $1.00 handling charge should be included with any requests for material.

Greensville County Public Schools; Greensville County, South Carolina.

An extensive account of a program to raise achievement levels and the overall quality of education in the county's schools is provided. The basic element of the program concerns promotions and grade assignments according to achievement rather than age. Numerous media articles about the program, schools involved, and the district superintendent's role are included.

Lincoln High School; Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin.

A lengthy explanation of the rationale for a competency program is provided by the district's high school principal. Additional materials provided include graduation requirements, special student policy statement, early graduation policy statement, and several sample administrative and evaluative forms.

Nebo School District; Spanish Fork, Utah.

A pamphlet describing the district's performance based Career Education Program includes sample minimum competencies in four areas. Student booklets, complete minimum standard lists for subject areas in both the junior and senior high schools, sample competency tests, and graduation requirements are available for a slight handling charge.

Parkrose Public Schools; Portland, Oregon.

A brief summary of the district's attempts to meet state standards includes the development of specific competencies, planned course statements, and competency tests. Sample test forms, curriculum guides, and course statements are available for a small fee.

Salt Lake City School District; Salt Lake City, Utah.

A brief history of the Basic Skills Education program, a discussion of the evaluative instruments, and information concerning subsidiary reading programs are provided. Sample test questions, student progress report forms, and competency lists are included. Additional progress reports, competency lists, and teacher manuals for various grade levels and subject areas may be purchased.

State of Oregon Department of Education; Salem, Oregon.

A brief summary of Oregon's high school graduation requirements and sample competencies are available. Appropriate sections of the State Standards for Oregon Schools are included.

West Milford Township Board of Education; West Milford, New Jersey.

Background information, standards, advantages, disadvantages, and recommendations for improvement of the district's minimum competency achievement program are provided. Results of the past two years' competency exams and subsequent tutoring programs are reported.

Westside High School; Omaha, Nebraska.

A description of minimum competency tests includes sample questions and test forms in different competency areas. Separate student handbooks for consumerism and mathematics competencies, and a faculty handbook for the oral communication competency test are included.

University of Texas; Austin, Texas.

The Adult Performance Level Project (APL) initiated in 1971, with a four-year research grant from the U.S. Office of Education, is described. Brief summaries of projects and activities growing out of the project and a list of available APL materials and publications are provided.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

Beal, Barry B. "Denver, Colorado: A 17-Year Old Minimum Competency Testing Program." Phi Delta Kappan, 59 (May, 1978), 610-11.

Emphasizing the individual rather than school-wide averages, a testing program was designed to diagnose skill deficiencies in arithmetic, spelling, grammar, and reading comprehension. The procedure includes: initial testing in grade nine, prescription of remedial work as needed, and provision of semi-annual opportunities for re-testing. A brief description of all four sub-tests is included.

Candor-Chandler, Catherine. "Charleston, West Virginia: Competency Requirements for Special Education Students." Phi Delta Kappan, 59 (May, 1978), 611-12.

Concerns related to course requirements and grades for special education students are credited with prompting the district to examine its graduation policies. Recommendations of committees representing various constituencies and the translation of their findings into a competency program are discussed.

Cook, J. Marvin. "The D.C. Schools' Plan for Systemwide Achievement." Educational Leadership, 35 (November, 1977), 114-17.

A competency based education consultant describes Washington, D.C.'s comprehensive program based on sequential instructional objectives and frequent opportunities for student success. Extensive planning, staff development and pilot testing used to prepare the district's administrators and teachers for implementation of the new program are discussed.

Engel, Grenda S. "One Way It Can Be." Today's Education, 66 (March/April, 1977), 50-2.

A consultant for an alternative school describes an experimental evaluation program developed to assess student progress without altering the educational environment. Results of the pilot project employing various means of assessing and reporting progress, were sufficiently positive to warrant its expansion.

Enochs, James C. "Modesto California: A Return to the Four R's." Phi Delta Kappan, 59 (May, 1978), 609-10.

One district's approach to minimum competency requirements is discussed, including basic skill requirements for promotion and high school graduation remediation opportunities, and specialized curriculum tracks in high schools. Student conduct codes and "Citizenship Accountability", "Character education", and a required course on motivation are elements of the program designed to promote the 4th R, responsibility.

Fillbrandt, James R. and Merz, William R. "The Assessment of Competency Reading and Mathematics Using Community Based Standards." Educational Research Quarterly, 2 (Spring, 1977), 3-11.

Competencies necessary for economic self-sufficiency, established in an attempt to both satisfy community demands and appease angry educators, are discussed. To determine the minimum level of achievement to be accepted on these competencies, a study was conducted in which both graduating seniors and "successful" job holders in the community were given competency tests.

Findley, Jim. "Westside's Minimum Competency Graduation Requirements: A Program That Works." Phi Delta Kappan, 59 (May, 1978), 614-18.

A comprehensive description of one school's competency program includes: its origins and progress; designation of areas to be tested; implementation guidelines; test analysis, including sample items and results; advantages/disadvantages; and problems with which officials have had to cope.

Fisher, Thomas H. "Florida's Approach to Competency Testing." Phi Delta Kappan, 59 (May, 1978), 599-602.

The Director of Student Assessment for Florida's State Department of Education presents a thorough overview of the 1976 Educational Accountability Act and implications for schools. Basic skill requirements; minimal competencies assessed by the functional literacy test; processes of test construction, piloting, and implementation; initial statewide results; provisions for remediation; and public reaction are discussed in this positive review of the program.

Guerriero, Carl A. "Assessing Attitudes and Values in Pennsylvania Schools." Educational Leadership, 34 (January, 1977), 268-71.

The Director of Pennsylvania's Educational Quality Assessment Program discusses goals and evaluation procedures developed, and curriculum revisions and other results of the program. Instituted in 1965, yearly

assessments are conducted of 1/3 the state's school districts, culminating in comprehensive reports for statewide and "similar schools" comparisons.

Hart, Gary K. "The California Pupil Proficiency Law As Viewed by Its Author." Phi Delta Kappan, 59 (May, 1978), 592-5.

Written by the author of California's competency legislation, himself a former teacher, this article provides a thorough explanation of that state's program and its intended outcomes. The need for built-in protection to prevent students from bearing the total burden of meeting competency requirements and the importance of local determination of competencies are stressed. Major goals of the program are outlined.

Henderson, Donald J. "Gary, Indiana: High School Diplomas With Meaning." Phi Delta Kappan, 59 (May, 1978), 613-14.

A program adopted in 1974, requiring demonstration of proficiency in reading, mathematics, and written/oral communication to qualify for a diploma, is explored. Testing procedures and requirements are discussed along with a K-12 instructional plan designed to enable students to meet designated objectives. Initial results are given.

Hornbeck, David W. "Maryland's 'Project Basic'." Educational Leadership, 35 (November, 1977), 98-101.

Maryland's State Superintendent of Education describes a program, to be implemented by 1982, to provide a variety of educational settings. Minimum competencies being developed in five areas are seen not as a terminal goal, but as a foundation for further learning. Potential problems of competency directed education and guiding principles of the State Board of Education are discussed.

Huff, Marylyn. "A Board Member Looks At Requiring Competencies for Graduation." Educational Leadership, 35 (November, 1977), 108-13.

A school board member in Charlotte, North Carolina, describes her district's program for competency testing as a graduation requirement. Steps leading to the development of the program, concerns of educators and the public, and resulting revisions are discussed. As a precaution against the development of an elitist educational system, the diploma/competency testing relationship remains undetermined until field testing data is available.

Kokes, Loralyn B. "Reading Program Helps Employees Step Ahead." Journal of Reading, 20 (February, 1977), 364-7.

The Coordinator for the Basic Employee Education Program at an Illinois hospital explains the establishment, purposes, procedures, and results of the program. Originally emphasizing the G.E.D. diploma as a goal, the program has now expanded to provide assistance for employees to reach personal life goals at all ability levels.

Kurtz, William H. "New H.S. Graduation Requirements: How They're Working." School and Community, 63 (January, 1977), 9+.

Advantages/disadvantages of Missouri's revised graduation requirements, altering the required course and credit guide, and increasing attendance options are discussed. In-service and public education programs are suggested to alleviate remaining dissatisfaction with the generally successful program.

McAndrew, Gordon L. "Accountability and the 3 R's." High School Journal, 60 (February, 1977), 238-41.

A Superintendent in Gary, Indiana, discusses his district's Basic Competency Program, instituted in 1974. Concerns prompting the program's establishment, minimum standards developed, remediation plans, and testing procedures are explored. Accountability is viewed as a joint responsibility of students, parents, and educators.

Nance, W.R. "Bus". "How Fares Competency Development in Oregon?" Educational eadership, 35 (November, 1977), [illegible]-7.

A graduation requirements specialist in Oregon describes that state's competency program, which was preceded by extensive planning and pilot projects. Components of the plan discussed include: attendance/course requirements, written planned course statements, and competencies in fourteen areas. Requirements for 1978 graduates are restricted to five of the areas, as the remainder are still under study.

Zaenglein, Judy Bauer; Kies, Kathleen; and Tardibuono, John. "Project 81: Reestablishing Partnerships." Educational Leadership, 35 (November, 1977), 118-22.

Pennsylvania's five-year plan to improve communication between schools and the public is explained. Adopted in 1976, the plan instituted an information gathering process across the state to determine public expectations of schooling. These expections are to be translated into

competency statements to clarify educational objectives, reduce the comparative nature of norm-referenced education, and increase the individualized nature of instruction.

NAEP

Forbes, Roy H. "NAEP: One 'Tool' to Improve Instruction." Educational Leadership, 34 (January, 1977), 276-81.

The Director of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), describes the program, its purposes, and uses of data reports to date. The information gathering function of the program is emphasized, as is the need for careful application of results to enhance educational benefits.

Kay, Brian. "National Assessment of Educational Progress in the United States." Trends in Education, 3 (September, 1976), 39-43.

An education officer from England describes the National Assessment of Educational Progress currently in use in the U.S. Background information concerning the development of NAEP, and a thorough explanation of testing procedures, sample selection, and reporting of results are presented. Offering both criticism and praise of the program, the author suggests England pattern its assessment program similarly.

Prakken, Lawrence W. "National Assessment Tells Us." School Shop, 36 (March, 1977), 2.

Presenting a brief description of the 1973-74 National Assessment of Career and Occupational Development and selected results, the author concludes revision of existing programs is necessary to increase their effectiveness.

Reys, Robert E. "Consumer Math: Just How Knowledgeable Are U.S. Young Adults?" Phi Delta Kappan, 58 (November, 1976),

A consultant for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), reports selected findings of the 1972-73 assessment of mathematical competencies of U.S. adults, aged 26-35. Curriculum questions drawn from these findings are presented for consideration, and means of improving the overall competency of consumers are suggested.

Taylor, Bob L. and Krakow, Jere. "NAEP's Implicit Assumptions." Educational Leadership, 35 (October, 1977), 47-51.

A brief history of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), description of its procedures, statement of its purposes, and report of selected conclusions are presented. Controversial assumptions of the NAEP are discussed, and it is suggested officials conduct public sessions explaining these assumptions to promote greater understanding of the program.

Venezky, Richard L. "NAEP--Should We Kill the Messenger Who Brings Bad News?" Reading Teacher, 30 (April, 1977), 750-6.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) analysis of data and published conclusions concerning reading levels of nine-year olds from 1971-75 are criticized. The misrepresentative reporting is attributed to the desires of NAEP officials to please the public and retain federal funding. Factors limiting current uses of NAEP results are discussed, and the program is praised for providing an alternative to norm-referenced, standardized tests.

TESTING (GENERAL)

Baldwin, Alexinia Young. "Tests Can Underpredict: A Case Study." Phi Delta Kappan, 58 (April, 1977), 620-1.

A longitudinal research study was conducted to test the hypothesis that standardized IQ and achievement test scores may underpredict a child's potential. A gifted program was designed for black students who were ineligible for participation by traditional testing standards. Results of the study, including the magnitude of later awards won by participants, are presented as evidence of the inaccuracy of standardized tests in predicting academic potential.

Boulos, Sami I. "Are We Obsessed with School Achievement?" Education, 97 (Summer, 1977), 381-4.

The author suggests the widespread emphasis on achievement and grades is the true cause of the test score decline. Citing reasons for the failure of this emphasis to result in higher levels of achievement, the author suggests restructuring educational thought so that the learner is central to the learning process.

Farrell, Edmund. "The Vice/Vise of Standardized Testing: National Depreciation by Quantification." English Journal, 65 (October, 1976), 10-12.

The author, chairman of the College Entrance Examination Board's English Committee to evaluate existing exams, discusses criticisms of standardized testing. A widespread campaign to educate the public concerning common misconceptions of testing is encouraged. Citing disturbing figures from the 7th Annual Gallop Poll of Public Attitudes Toward Education, the author cautions against an over-emphasis on accountability and testing to the extent of dehumanizing the curriculum.

Fleming, Dan B. "Social Studies Standardized Achievement Tests: Are They Worth It?" Peabody Journal of Education, 54 (July, 1977), 292-6.

The accountability movement in social studies education and resulting testing programs are discussed, using Virginia's program as an example. Presenting sample test questions to support criticisms of standardized testing, the author suggests criterion-referenced testing as an alternative for accountability purposes.

Popham, W. James. "Customized Criterion-Referenced Tests." Educational Leadership, 34 (January, 1977), 258-9.

Standardized, norm-referenced tests are being increasingly replaced by criterion-referenced tests, posing several problems for school systems, particularly in the area of test construction. These problems and possible solutions are discussed.

Anderson, Barry D. and Lesser, Philip. "The Costs of Legislated Minimum Competency Requirements." Phi Delta Kappan, 59 (May, 1978), 606-8.

The "hidden" costs of minimum competency requirements are explored, as well as the overt expenses of testing and remediation programs. Suggestions for minimizing costs include: statewide assessments of sample schools, cooperative efforts of state departments of education in sharing test items, and restricted use of compensatory education programs to reward those districts with high achievement levels.

"Before You Hand Out Those Diplomas: Should Your Students Prove They've Learned Something?" The American School Board Journal, 164 (March, 1977), 41-3.

A booklet compiled by a NASSP associate describing the current status of proficiency testing is reviewed. Topics include: Oregon's survival skills testing program advantages/disadvantages of competency testing as a graduation requirement, and the importance of remedial programs.

Brickell, Henry M "Seven Key Notes on Minimum Competency Testing." Phi Delta Kappan, 59 (May, 1978), 589-92.

A thought-provoking discussion of decision-making areas of minimum competency testing programs includes: determination of competencies, means and frequency of measurement, level of minimum acceptable standard, use of multiple standards, focus on students' or schools' competency, and provisions for the incompetent.

Decker, Max. "Suggestions for Measuring Competency." School and Community, 63 (November, 1976), 21-2.

Nine issues surrounding competency programs are discussed. Among these are: test construction, content, administration, and revision; communication of deficiencies; and remediation.

ERIC Report. "What Do You Know About Competency-Based Education?" NASSP Bulletin, 62 (January, 1978), 153-5.

A capsulized view of competency-based education is provided through three true/false questions and their answers. Basic information includes an operational definition, distinction from the back-to-basics movement, and overview of related state requirements to date. The compatibility of CBE and individualized instruction is stressed.

Lundstrom, Meg. "The Slow But Sure Growth of Statewide Assessments." Compact, 10 (Autumn, 1976), 3-5.

Factors contributing to and inhibiting the development of statewide assessments, and the current status of such programs are discussed. Exemplary local and state programs are examined, for problem areas and positive features.

Madaus, George F. and Airasian, Peter W. "Issues in Evaluating Student Outcomes in Competency-Based Graduation Programs." Journal of Research and Development in Education, 10 (Spring, 1977), 79-91.

Competency-based graduation requirements developed from performance objectives are discussed. Purposes for specifying and evaluating minimal competencies, problem areas of student evaluation, and suggestions for dealing with these problems are outlined.

Monk, James A. "But What is Minimum Competency?" Instructor, 86 (January, 1977), 28.

New York's emphases on minimum competency standards and exams are criticized by an administrator, who suggests educators concentrate instead on individualizing each student's educational experiences.

Pipho, Chris. "Minimal Competency Standards." Today's Education, 67 (February/March, 1978), 34-7.

A comprehensive summary of state legislative actions concerning minimum competencies is provided. Thought-provoking questions are presented to stimulate dialogue on this controversial issue. Also included are NEA guidelines for establishing state and local testing programs, and a statement from HEW Secretary Joseph Califano.

Pipho, Chris. "Minimum Competency Testing in 1978: A Look at State Standards." Phi Delta Kappan, 59 (May, 1978), 585-8.

The minimum competency testing movement, spreading rapidly for the past few years, is characterized currently as "mellowing with age." Immediate and more thoughtful actions by state legislators and boards of education are briefly summarized and contrasted. A comprehensive description of competency testing legislation in thirty-three states includes: action taken, skill areas/grade levels to be assessed, setting of standards and selection of tests, and related information.

Schab, Fred. "Who Wants What Minimal Competencies?" Phi Delta Kappan, 59 (January, 1978), 350-2.

Students, parents, teachers, and administrators in Georgia were surveyed to assess their attitudes toward minimal competency requirements. Generally, results indicated higher expectations from students and parents than from professional educators. Desired competencies or graduation requirements of the nonprofessionals surveyed included: achievement of 12th grade level of basic skills; political awareness and physical survival skills; practical job experience; and alternative means of earning graduation credits.

Schramm, C.F. "Comparing Schools by Academic Achievement Scores." Phi Delta Kappan, 58 (December, 1976), 324-6.

Florida's Educational Accountability Act of 1976 requires annual reports on student achievement in relation to adopted standards. Dangers of uninformed interpretation of these reports and statewide comparison of unequal school districts are discussed. A public education and information program is suggested to prevent the spread of competitive view of the schools's achievement reports

Schwartz, Stuart E. "Competency-Based Education--Basic Problems and a Suggested Solution." Education, 98 (Fall, 1977), 57-61.

Problems discussed include: inconsistent use of terminology and vocabulary, incompatibility of competency-based education components and formats, and reluctance of program and material developers to coordinate efforts and share results with colleagues. Possible causes are explored and the development of a committee to supervise multiple aspects of competency based teacher education is suggested as a potential solution.

Strike, Kenneth A. "What Is a 'Competent' High School Graduate?" Educational Leadership, 35 (November, 1977), 93-7.

The establishment of minimum competency graduation requirements is traced to the 1973 Peter Doe, San Francisco School Board case. The determination of minimum competency is seen from a social standpoint, focusing on those competencies which are essential to the maintenance of our society, such as political, economical, and literacy skills. Caution is urged to prevent unnecessary withholding of a high school diploma, essential for entry into the labor market, from segments of the population already having difficulty becoming self-supporting citizens.

"Those 'Minimal Competency Tests' -- Will They Be the Raft of the Ruin of the Public Schools?" American School Board Journal, 165 (January, 1978), 28-9.

The rapid spread of minimal competency testing programs throughout the nation's schools is briefly summarized, highlighting specific state/local programs, and pending legislation. Important aspects for consideration are presented, including: specification of competencies and level of achievement, means of evaluation, and provisions for remedial help for those who fail.

BACK TO BASICS (GENERAL)

Barth, Rodney J. "Notes and Quotes on Back to Basics." English Journal, 65 (November, 1976), 88-91.

ERIC/RCS publications concerning the back to basics trend and related issues are summarized. Examples of topics are: standardized college entrance exam scores, NAEP, social issues, and the "forward to fundamentals" movement.

Bonham, George W. "The Politics of Minimalcy." Change, 9 (November, 1977), 12-13.

In this editorial, a brief history of events and conditions contributing to the public demand for basic skills competency-requirements is followed by a discussion of the major disadvantages of such a movement. A balanced approach to curricular reform is urged. "Mindless" minimal standards are criticized and a "return to basic sanity" is advocated.

Brodinsky, Ben. "Back to the Basics: The Movement and Its Meaning." Phi Delta Kappan, 58 (March, 1977), 522-7.

Various goals of back-to-basics supporters and causes of the movement are presented. The status of fundamental, alternative schools; testing programs; minimum competency requirements; curriculum revisions; state legislation concerning basic skills; potential merits of the movement; and major concerns of educators are discussed.

Burton, Dwight L. "Relax with Back-to-Basics." English Journal, 65 (November, 1976), 5-6.

Expressing a unique reaction to the back-to-basics trend, the author suggests the movement will be a passing phenomenon, and uses examples to support this prediction. Although the author, former editor of the English Journal, takes a light approach to the back-to-basics movement, he stresses the importance of teaching basic communication skills.

DeTurk, Philip H. "The Basics: Timeless or Mindless?" National Elementary Principal, 56 (May/June, 1977), 51-4.

The back-to-basics movement, an undefined phrase confusing social an educational issues, is likened in this respect to the open education movement. The SAT report on the test score decline and the Bennett Study are presented as examples of information misused by back-to-basics supporters. Constructive educational reforms are suggested.

Donnelly, Joseph. "How Far Back in Returning to the Basics?" NASSP Bulletin, 62 (May, 1978), 126-9.

Suggesting the over-specialization of teachers is partially to blame for basic skill deficiencies of today's students, the author urges all teachers to assume responsibility for teaching basic skills. By incorporating basic skill instruction in all curricular areas, a renewed emphasis on skill development would be made possible, without reverting to the school organization of the early 1900's.

Down, A. Graham. "Why Basic Education?" National Elementary Principal, 57 (October, 1977), 28-32.

The executive director of the Council for Basic Education summarizes the CBE's basic principles and its relationship to the back-to-basics movement. A discussion of current programs presents some as potential models and criticizes others, such as Oregon's survival skills approach. The need for in-service, staff development programs is stressed.

Freers, Ann McCallum. "Basic Skills Redefined--What Do Students Need?" Thrust, 7 (January, 1978), 7-8.

A brief look at the basic skills and accountability movements includes a summary of deficiencies and their possible causes, as well as an overview of recent California legislation. Cautioning against a reverse swing of the pendulum to strict disciplinary practices and a narrow view of educational purposes, the author suggests the emphasis of a "4th R" responsibility.

Graves, Donald H. "Back to Basics--The Bennett Study." Language Arts, 53 (October, 1976), 822-7.

A controversial research study, often misinterpreted as supportive of the back to basics movement, is reviewed. Attempting to discover the effects of teaching styles on the development of different students, the study has been viewed by some as a condemnation of informal education. Meaningful learning, regardless of educational structure, is seen as an essential element of education.

Haley, Beverly. "Back to the Basics--Fact or Fad?" NASSP Bulletin, 61 (April, 1977), 75-9.

In rebuttal of an article by Ronald Reagan demanding a return to basic instruction, the author charges non-educational, societal issues are

the major sources of support for this regressive movement. Cautioning against the adoption of such an extreme approach, the author discusses potential dangers and urges administrators to promote as the "basic" goal of education the development of each individual's fullest potential.

Hechinger, Fred M. "The Back-to-the-Basics Impact." Today's Education, 67 (February/March, 1978), 30-2.

Although supporting the effective teaching of basic skills as a priority, the author criticizes misapplications of the movement, including: support of corporal punishment; re-instatement of dress codes; and elimination of curricular "frills", such as the fine arts. Emphasis on the application of basic skills to challenging and interesting activities and the role of the parent in encouraging the development of basic skills are also discussed.

Hechinger, Fred M. "Forward to the Basics." Teacher, 94 (May, 1977), 22-6.

The author coins a slogan signifying a high priority for basic skill in a progressive atmosphere. One of the first "3 R's" schools is presented as a model for back-to-basics schools, having both concentrated basic skills instruction and a positive educational environment.

Heller, Mel. "Back to the Basics." NASSP Bulletin, 6 (April, 1977), 72-4.

Citing various factors contributing to the current "back to basics" movement, the author suggests the name implies basic skills have not been emphasized in recent years. Claiming the correct application of educational innovations can enhance all learning, the author advocates ridding education only of the abuses of these innovations, rather than abandoning the changes themselves.

Hogan, Robert F. and Judy, Stephen. "The 'Back to Basics' Controversy." Media and Methods, 13 (September, 1976), 16-18+.

Critical of the simplistic approach of the "back to basics" movement, the authors, one of whom is the editor of the English Journal, suggest an alternative. Entitled "forward to fundamentals", this program has a goal of comprehensive literacy. Issues contributing to the "back to basics" movement and its varied interpretations are also examined.

Back-to-Basics (General)

Jarrett, James L. "I'm for Basics, But Let Me Define Them." Phi Delta Kappan, 59 (December, 1977), 235-9.

Multiple interpretations of educational basics are explored. The author suggests combining the more praiseworthy elements of the British and American educational systems to provide a better educational foundation for students. Direct teaching of oral/written communication skills, and exploration of imaginative and creative capabilities are encouraged.

Lemke, Alan. "Which Basics?" Clearing House, 51 (September, 1977), 14-16.

Various interpretations of the "basics" are discussed, illustrating the complexity of the back-to-basics movement. Professionals and laypersons concerned about quality education are urged to communicate their views on the issues involved to establish guidelines for the schools to select, integrate, prioritize, explore, and transcend the basics.

Pharis, Bill. "You Can't Go Home Again if You Never Moved Away." National Elementary Principal, 55 (July/August, 1976), 69.

The term "back-to-basics" is criticized for its implication that educators once taught the "basics" but chose to abandon them in recent years. Offering his own definition of terms, the author suggests a more appropriate slogan is "forward to basics," urging educators to provide the best possible education for each student.

Silverblank, Francine. "Neglect of Basic Skills in Our Schools Has Borne Some Bitter Fruit." Education, 98 (Winter, 1977), 177-9.

Criticizing the alleged dominance of humanism in education, the author advocates the restoration of academic achievement to its place at the top of the goal hierarchy. Employer dissatisfaction with entry-level workers and consumer malpractice suits against teachers are cited as proof of the humanistic system's failure with a close examination of evaluation practices and conversion to criterion-referenced standards suggested.

Walker, Decker F. "The Hard Lot of the Professional in a Reform Movement." Educational Leadership, 35 (November, 1977), 83-5.

The simplistic approach of the back-to-basics supporters is criticized and potential dangers are outlined. A constructive view of public policy-making for education is suggested as a more beneficial approach

to educational problems. Professionals are urged to convince the general public of their concern for improving basic skill levels of all students, while avoiding the negative effects of a bandwagon approach to competency testing.

BACK TO BASICS (CURRICULUM)

Bergen, Timothy L., Jr. "Why Can't Johnny Write?" English Journal, 65 (November, 1976), 36-7.

Tests, standardized and teacher-made, and classroom assignments inhibiting the development of writing skills are criticized. Suggestions are given to help educators overcome central problems in teaching writing.

Cawelti, Gordon. "Requiring Competencies for Graduation -- Some Curricular Issues." Educational Leadership, 35 (November, 1977), 86-91.

Issues discussed include: factors contributing to low achievement levels, current status of the competency-based education movement, related curricular issues, and potential benefits. Critical of a narrow definition of general education, the author offers suggestions for broadening that view.

Eddy, Junius. "Art Education: The Basics and Beyond." Art Education, 30 (November, 1977), 6-12.

The author discusses the back-to-basics movement and its various interpretations in curricular decisions. Justifying the arts as part of the basics, rather than the "frills" of education, the author quotes the executive director of the Council for Basic Education. The value of studying the arts as a means to more effective learning of other subject areas and thinking processes is explored.

Elgin, Suzette Haden. "Why Newsweek Can't Tell Us Why Johnny Can't Write." English Journal, 65 (November, 1976), 29-35.

The author quotes a passage from the infamous Newsweek article on declining literacy and refutes main points. The position of the modern linguist and myths surrounding literacy and linguistics are discussed, with examples given to illustrate the usage of non-standard English in accepted sources.

Foshay, Arthur W. "What's Basic About the Curriculum?" Language Arts, 54 (September, 1977), 616-24.

The author traces the back-to-basics trend to medieval debates between academicians and formalists concerning appropriate curriculum offerings. A discussion of four areas basic to life, and therefore to education, includes: coping skills, character or social development, citizenship, and private realization.

Fox, Patricia. "Why Johnny Can't and the Cat in the Hat: An Article in Two Parts." English Journal, 65 (November, 1976), 38-9.

The author cites a lack of opportunities for practice in writing and an abundance of oral reports and objective tests as contributing factors to the inability of many students to write. Writing teachers are encouraged to serve as consultants for other educators to increase classroom opportunities for writing.

Goecke, Norma. "What Do They Mean by 'Back to Basics'?" Music Educators Journal, 63 (November, 1976), 30-3.

Public criticisms of the educational system leading to the back to basics movement, various interpretations of the meaning and purposes of the movement, and its effects on curriculum are explored. Suggestions are given for fine arts teachers to ensure the continued inclusion of their programs in the curriculum.

Harbeck, Mary Blatt. "Is Science Basic? You Bet It Is!" Teacher, 94 (November, 1976), 22-6+.

The concern of science educators that a narrow interpretation of the back-to-basics movement will exclude science from the curriculum is expressed. Other potential negative effects are discussed, as are positive effects of science education and reasons for its continued inclusion in the curriculum.

Havis, Andrew Lee and Yawkey, Thomas Daniels. "Back-to-Basics' in Early Childhood Education: A Re-Examination of 'Good Old 'Rithmetic.'" Education, 98 (Winter, 1977), 135-40.

The authors explore the relationship between the application of Piaget's developmental theory of mathematics and the demand for teaching basic math skills. Specific examples of early childhood learning events are provided to illustrate Piaget's basic theories. Various advantages of a developmental approach to mathematics and justification for its inclusion in a basic skills program are given.

Hopkins, Charles R. "Consumer Education--A Need That Must Be Met." Business Education Forum, 30 (May, 1976), 26-7.

A broader view of vocational education to produce consumers as well as production workers is advocated. Results of a survey of Minnesota's vocational education training programs, conducted to determine how well students' consumer needs were being met, suggested expansion of current programs to provide comprehensive training.

McDonough, Bernice. "Behold the Tower of Babble." Language Arts, 54 (September, 1977), 652-4.

A satire on the back-to-basics, accountability, and competency testing movements suggests educators and parents have forgotten that books, and time to read them, are as essential to reading skill development as audio-visual materials, educational games, and workbooks.

Nye, Bernard. "Marketing and Distribution Effective Accountability Tool for Distributive Educators." Business Education Forum, 31 (March, 1977), 28-30.

Distributive educators are advised to not only accept, but encourage accountability measures to improve the quality of vocational distributive education. Sample procedures and uses for a comprehensive follow-up system for program graduates are discussed.

Parker, Robert P., Jr. and Meskin, Leslie. "Who Says Johnny Can't Write?" English Journal, 65 (November, 1976), 42-6.

Writing ability is not viewed as a single ability one does or does not possess, but as an ability that varies with the type of writing. Alternative modes of writing, in addition to the traditional expository form, are suggested for classroom exploration. Programs based on such a philosophy are discussed, presenting contrasting samples of students' writing in different styles.

Schuster, Edgar H. "'Back to Basics'" What Does It Really Mean?" Clearing House, 50 (February, 1977), 237-9.

Misguided efforts of secondary language arts teachers to teach "basics" are discussed. "Forward to basics" is advocated to increase the effectiveness of teaching fundamental skills, without ignoring modern educational theory.

Winterowd, W. Ross. "A Teacher's Guide to the Real Basics." Language Arts, 54 (September, 1977), 625-30.

As the title implies, this article is intended as a teacher's manual for coping with the pressures of the back-to-basics movement. After examining various aspects of the implications of the movement for language arts teachers, the author suggests a new set of basics, including: syntactic fluency, conceptualization of context, and responsible or ethical writing.